The Teaching of Temperance in Schools.

PRESIDENT.

The next item of business is the resolution standing in the name of Mr. Nunez.

Mr. S. F. NUNEZ.

Sir, I beg to move the following resolution which stands in my name:—

"*That this Council recommends to the Government that necessary steps be taken as early as possible for the compulsory teaching of Temperance in all recognised schools*".

Sir, in commending this resolution to the acceptance of the House, there is no need to argue at length on the urgent necessity of impressing on the minds of the young pupils about the evils of drink. Various methods have been suggested in these days to combat the drink evil, viz., restrictive measures, such as regulation and control in the manufacture and sale of liquor, Local Option and, finally, total Prohibition itself. Without entering into a discussion of the merits and demerits of these methods, I can unhesitatingly say that none of them would be a success, unless the moral consciousness of the people is aroused against the evils of alcoholism by active propaganda work. To quote the words of the Member for Mulakunnattukavu, spoken in the budget session of the Council:

"The great majority of the people who are addicted to drink in Cochin are blissfully ignorant of its evils, and of the moral and physical deterioration for which it is responsible. They know, of course, of the pleasures of drink, but have no idea of its pains and penalties".

Sir, a child's mind is just like a white paper; and if we impress on it the evils of drink, he will have always an aversion for it. When persons become habitual drunkards, mere persuasion and advice given to them at the advanced stage of their lives will not be successful in its results. Temperance workers must have very well realised this fact. With all their enthusiasm in going about from place to place and preaching the virtues of Temperance, their attempts are not crowned with much success; because it is exceedingly difficult to rouse the moral consciousness of grown-up and confirmed drunkards. It is to prevent people from developing this cursed habit that we should bring home vividly the evils of intemperance to the impressionable minds of the youngsters, while they are still in schools

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

This resolution has, therefore, been tabled to remove all chances of persons becoming drunkards in their later lives. It suggests that steps should be taken to teach the evils of drink as a compulsory subject in all recognised schools. Suitable text-books in the vernacular as well as in English, wherein there will be illustrations of drunken men and women, and the ruin that is brought upon themselves and their families, may be prescribed with much profit to the pupils. If a complete text-book on Temperance cannot be prescribed separately just now, at least a distinct and prominent place may be given to the physical evils of drink in the Hygiene syllabus, and on the moral evils of drink in the syllabus of Moral Instruction. Provision also must be made by the Education Department for lantern lectures, which will give the children a vivid idea of the evils of drunkenness. Some slides on Temperance must be purchased and distributed among the Inspectors of Schools, who could use them advantageously during their inspection of schools. Then there are charts and diagrams illustrating graphically the several aspects of the drink evil, which could profitably be hung up in the class rooms.

Here, Sir, I shall anticipate a few of the objections to my resolution. It may be said that drinking is not one of the vices which assail school children; and that we should not talk about this to children who are quite innocent. But one of the charts I handed over a few minutes back to the Education Member will show that, out of 259 alcoholic patients at Bellevue Hospital (Vienna), 28 per cent began the drink habit at the 12th year, 39 per cent at the 16th year, and the rest at about the age of 21. Certain recent rumours about the behaviour of the boys of one of the schools make me pessimistic about the innocence of some at least of our school children, however much I wish to be generous in my opinion of them. But then, supposing that all of them are free from this vice, are we to understand that, if we teach morals, it will lead to immorality? Are we to understand that, if virtues are taught in text-books in schools and vice deprecated, the pupils are likely to learn exactly the opposite of what has been taught to them in schools? Then the Ten Commandments cannot be taught to Christian children, for they may tell lies, steal and do even worse things. I fail to appreciate the correctness of this objection.

It may also be said that some teachers might be drunkards; and so it will be farcical for the Government to ask them to teach Temperance. I don't think the Government can be accused of giving billets to drunken teachers seeking employment, when

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

there are so many sober applicants for a teacher's post, roaming about in search of employment. So this objection also fails to the ground. I do not want to make particular references.

Mr. M. K. RAMAN.

Are any of the teachers of the State addicted to drink?

Mr. S. F. NUNEZ.

The Education Member can enlighten us on this point.

Mr. C. MATTHAI.

There is one instance, and I have no objection to give information about him. It is the case of a smart young graduate. He had a post in Madras, and he belonged to Trichur.

PRESIDENT.

Don't name him please.

Mr. C. MATTHAI.

Unhappily, he was dismissed on account of this habit, as the Madras authorities could not tolerate such things. His father, a teacher in one of the High Schools, approached me, and requested me to provide him with a post. I told him that I had no objection to put him in one of the High Schools. When I talked to him, I found him to be very smart, and he could write good English. But on pay days he was found to be rolling on the public road. Then I put him into half a dozen schools. The very same thing happened. Then I called his father, and told him that I could not get on with his son. It is only on pay days. Till then he was alright. His father requested me to frighten him, and make him take leave on loss of pay. I told him, "I have no objection to that". He brought in the application, and he was granted leave. His father told me that he also would take three months' leave and cure him of this evil. The father kept him in his own room for three months, tied to the leg of his chair. After the period, the father came back and told me that his son was all right. I told him I had no objection to take him again. "Before that", I said "why not take his pledge"? And he and I sat together to take his pledge.

And he then went back, and on the pay day he again became drunk, and then I dismissed him from the service. He went wandering about, fell somewhere and died.

Mr. GEORGE CHAKYAMURI.

You could have put him in the Excise Department.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

Mr. S. F. NUNEZ.

The Madras Government took up this all-important subject of teaching Temperance to school children as early as 1906. I shall just read out in support of this statement an extract from the speech of the Hon'ble Rao Bahadur (now Sir) A. P. Patro, in the Madras Legislative Council:—

" Ever since 1906, the policy of the Government has been to impress upon the Managers of the institutions and Head-masters to take up the Temperance work and the necessity of teaching moral lessons including those on Temperance. I would like to give you a summary of the Government order issued in 1914, when the whole, matter was considered, and in accordance with the policy of the Government, instructions were given on what was necessary to promote Temperance. In 1914 the following instructions were issued by the Government, The Director of Public Instruction was instructed to take the necessary steps:—

1. The importance of Temperance teaching to be impressed on the teachers by the Inspecting Officers with a view to their inculcating habits of Temperance in their pupils.

2. The second thing which the Government has insisted on is passages in readers relating to Temperance to be made the occasion for speaking to pupils on the advantages and necessity of Temperance.

3. Regular lessons on the subject in certain schools."

Sir, the Madras Educational Department gave immediate effect to the Government order referred to above by drawing up syllabuses on the subject of Temperance and encouraging the publication of suitable text-books to be used in the schools of the Presidency. I shall here repeat two such books—one called "Life, Light and Cleanliness" published in 1914, and the other entitled "Health Reader" published in 1918. Lantern lectures on Temperance are also given in many of the Madras schools. The Madras Government should certainly be congratulated in taking the initiative in this matter ; and it now behoves us in Cochin to imitate it by introducing the teaching of Temperance in our schools too, and thus minimise the drink evil from our midst. If the subject of Temperance is given due importance in our syllabus of studies, our posterity will grow up a set of clean thinking and clean living people, alive alike to their duties as citizens and as the children of God.

Mr. N. PADMANABHA MENON.

Sir, I second the resolution.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

Mr. C. MATTHAI.

Sir, as the Hon'ble mover himself has said, we had a discussion on the subject, and I told him that we have already made provision for Moral Teaching in schools. There is a section of the Code which says that provision shall be made for imparting Moral Instruction in schools, attendance being optional, this class being held once in a week. When the new Code was brought into force, this was left inoperative. The Government thought, for certain special reasons, that the rule need not be compulsory. Again, we discussed the subject of Moral Instruction in schools in the last year's Head-masters' Conference. It is high time that we introduce regular moral teaching in schools. As the Head-masters said that they did not anticipate any tangible result from the teaching of moral lessons, and therefore, in addressing the Government we said that we leave it to the option entirely of the Head-masters and Managers of schools. Real beneficial work could be done by giving moral education, and they were at liberty to use this rule, and a correction slip was issued. It is now left to the power of the Head-masters. If they find that they could arrange work satisfactorily, and if they have got teachers who would do the work well, they can give moral instruction. The difficulty arises this way. As you know, in regard to serious things like giving moral lessons, there should be some personality in the teacher. If he does not possess that, it is worse than useless to impart such instruction. Therefore, we thought that, rather than enforcing it as a compulsory thing, we could well leave it to the option of those concerned.

PRESIDENT.

Is it done anywhere?

Mr. C. MATTHAI.

In very many places it is done. Temperance forms a part of Moral Teaching. Temperance has a moral and physical aspect, and therefore, it forms a legitimate part of Moral teaching.

PRESIDENT.

Is any examination held in the subject?

Mr. C. MATTHAI.

No examination. We have absolutely no objection to the teaching of Temperance, as matters stand, but we have not made it compulsory.

Mr. C. A. OUSEPH.

If this is done, then the object of the resolution is served.

Mr. C. MATTHAI.

All Malayalam readers in lower classes contain certain lessons on Temperance, and the evils of drink. In higher

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

classes we have Physiology and Hygeine, which deal with the physical aspect of the thing and impress upon the people the evils of intemperance. I think there is no difficulty at all in introducing Temperance Teaching. There is the subject of charts and pictures which serve very much to impress these facts upon the children. We shall make that a regular part of the school work. Thus the resolution is acceptable to us.

Mr. S. F. NUNEZ.

Circulars must be sent to all schools to give to the subject a prominent place in the curriculum of Moral Instruction.

PRESIDENT.

That can be done.

Mr. K. S. RAMA AYYAR.

I would object to the resolution of Mr. Nunez. In fact, more dangerous vice may come under the term "Intemperance" than the vice of drink, if prominence is to be given to the evils of drink.

PRESIDENT.

What are the other evils that may come, if instruction is given about Temperance?

Mr. K. S. RAMA AYYAR.

Evils like theft and others may come in. I think it is objectionable to assign a definite place to the giving of instruction on Temperance.

Mr. C. MATTHAI.

I said a definite place will be given to Temperance, and the evils of drink will be given the most prominent place. The amendment tabled also refers to the evils of drink.

Mr. K. S. RAMA AYYAR.

Temperance means much more than that. All these necessary items should be included, and the evils of drink may then be given the most prominent place.

Mr. S. F. NUNEZ.

I have no objection. I would add the term "distinct place".

PRESIDENT.

This is a prominent resolution, and so we shall distinctly decide this point to-morrow.

The Council adjourned for the morrow at 5 p. m.

T. K. KRISHNA MENON,

Secretary to the Council.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly